

Congressional Members Comments from the Congressional Record on why they didn't want to support 100MD aid to the resistance

Senator Pell - The Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus released a report entitled, "The Contra High Command: An Independent Analysis of the Military Leadership of the FDN." It concludes that 12 of the 13 principal leaders of the FDN Contra force "are today as they have been since 1980, ex-National Guard officers," who served the Somoza dictatorship. The Department of State, while differing on what constitutes the "High Command," confirmed my contention, supported by the caucus report, that the FDN leadership is largeley in the hands of former officers of the Somoza National Guard. On March 13, in response to my letter of March 4, in which I asked specific questions regarding the FDN military leadership, the State Department confirmed that 9 of the 13 names listed by the caucus were members of the High Command are former Guard officers. As the caucus report states, while service in the National Guard need not be viewed as itself disreputable, the problem is that the administration wants to arm, equip, and train these people, some of whom were "personally responsible for brutality *** repression or corruption, as well as close personal associates of Somoza." (Senator Pell voted against aid.)

Senator Harkin - Said the same thing as Senator Pell. (Senator Harkin voted against aid.)

Representative Obey - The question is whether or not \$100 million in aid to the Contras is going to achieve the laudable goals of the administration. It is a question of whether or not giving \$100 million to a second-rate military operation called the Contras is likely to achieve that goal. I think people who have looked at it clearly feel that the answer is no. Certainly \$100 million is not enough to topple the Sandinista regime. It is certainly not enough pressure to convert convinced Marxists into reasonable negotiators. It is enough, however, to get the United States into a lot of trouble. It is enough to get the United States on the slippery slope to direct military involvement in Central America. The United States of America, with our great tradition, should not be in the business of funding a grinding, low-level, dirty little war under conditions in which, at best, we can play to a tie. We cannot win with \$100 million. I think everybody knows that. We should not be conducting or financing a military operation against a country with whom we have diplomatic relations. (Congressman Obey voted against aid.)

Representative McCloskey - I rise today in strong opposition to the request for \$100 million in military and other aid to the Contra guerrillas. This military aid request does not promise peace but only protracted military involvement and death, injury, disfigurement, and dismemberment of untold thousands. We should stand with the U.S. Catholic Conference and the Society of Jesus in rejecting this unwise package and more vigorously pursue a just peace. (Representative McCloskey voted against aid.)

Representative McKinney - It is amazing to me that they say the mark of a true democracy is the civility with which we conduct our disagreements. I disagree with the President of the United States on his request for aid to the Congras. Where is Nicaragua going to expand? It is going to expand to Honduras with \$30 million worth of American fortifications? Is it going to expand to the south into Costa Rica, one of the greatest free nations of Central America, and irritate all of Central and South America as well as the Western World? Or is a nation quite the size of New York State, going to attack the United States? It is not. What makes communism is really the basis of this argument.

Now every time some radical kook, some Daniel Ortega, some person of that ilk stands up and says, "Look at the United States," he seems to be proven right by our very actions. It is wrong not to exhaust all diplomatic channels before exercising a military option. We are, by our actions, by our statements, and by our movements, making more Communists in Central and South America than Mr. Ortega can possibly make.

We also are being distracted from bigger problems. I happen to love Mexico. I think it is a beautiful, beautiful country, but it has monstrously big economic and internal problems, and we are being distracted from those problems.

Then I have to ask myself who am I being asked to back? Who? The three gentleman that used to be with that great Nicaraguan by the name of Mr. Somoza that visited my office? I am told that these are freedom fighters. Freedom for who? The Contras do not have the popular support of the Nicaraguan people. Who elected them? And who do they represent? (McKinney couldn't remember the names of the three people, he thinks Mr. Cruz was one of them.) Let us leave it simply by saying, whether they were anti-Somoza or pro-Somoza, why eight months before the downfall of Mr. Somoza were we not so interested in overthrowing him as we are Mr. Ortega? (Mr. McKinney voted against aid.)

Representative Wise - I have come to the conclusion that it would be wrong to support the President's request to give \$100 million of which \$70 million would be direct military aid to the Contras. I arrive at that decision with several of the following facts and reasonings: First, that our allies in the region themselves have opposed this U.S. military aid to the Contras; not only the four Contadora nations but four other nations in the region have urged rejection. And I know the arguments are made that there is private acceptance of it even though there is public rejection. Yet I have not heard any of that private acceptance. What I have heard is instead from the President of Costa Rica that "If you have \$100 million, there is a lot more use to put it to than giving it to the Contras." I look at the fact that the Contras have simply not proven to be an effective fighting force, perhaps because they have not gotten the material they need, some would argue, but I have to look at the fact that during the Somoza regime 6,000

guerrillas, some Sandinistas, some from a wider base, overthrew an unpopular regime. I look today at 1986 and I see 15,000 to 20,000 guerrillas not able to do so, indeed for the most part cannot operate within the country. Why is that? I have to conclude that it is lack of popular support, not that the Nicaraguan people are endorsing the Sandinistas by any extent but they are also saying we do not see the Contras as an acceptable or viable alternative.

One thing that goes ignored is that the President's request asks for more than money. The President's request would lift the prohibition against using American military advisers to work with Contra units. And so we begin to walk down the road. (Representative Wise voted against aid.)

Representative Boxer - I raise in strong opposition to the Contra aid package currently before us. Why should we spend \$100 million dollars needed so desperately in our country-to carry out a failing policy. Nobody believes that the Contras can win, no matter how much aid we lavish upon them. And by removing the important prohibition on CIA or Defense Department involvement, this particular proposal raises the specter of American advisers working side by side with the Contras. National reconciliation is achieved by diplomacy, not by guns. The Contras are not freedom fighters; they are terrorists who carry out indiscriminate attacks on civilians. Nicaraguan people know that a Contra victory will likely result in a government run by such former Somociastas as Ricardo Lau, the man accused of plotting the assassination of Archbishop Romero of El Salvador, or Armando Lopez, former head of the Managua policy forces at a time when that organization was criticized by international human rights groups for committing torture and assassinations. The Nicaraguan people do not believe that the Contras are freedom fighters. Documented reports have concluded that a major cocaine smuggling ring in the San Francisco Bay Area netted over \$500,000 for Contra groups in Costa Rica. One of those convicted for smuggling stated that proceeds from the cocaine, "belonged to *** the Contra revolution." Let me end by saying that if you vote for this package, you vote to throw \$100 million down a bottomless hole; instead, we could spend it on our farmers, our homeless, our kids. (Representative Boxer did not vote for aid.)

Representative Dellums - The Contra aid, in terms of international law, also violates article 15 of the Organization of American States. I want to insert something else into this debate that we need to look at. No one, not even the Foreign Affairs Committee, has raised the question of the legal status of the Contras. There are only three things the Contras can be. First, they can be internal dissidents under the Geneva accords. If that is not what they are, the only two other things they can be is members of another country's armed forces? If they do not qualify as that, the only other alternative is that they are mercenaries and terrorists. Let me tell you why they do not qualify as internal dissidents.

Many of the Contras are not Nicaraguan nationals and cannot be classified as internal dissidents. The Contras operate under disunified leadership and are sometimes directed by the CIA and other American citizens. The Contras control no territory in Nicaragua where they can launch "sustained and concerted military operations." They launch their operations from outside Nicaragua. They do not qualify on the basis of international law as internal dissidents. (Representative Dellums did not vote for aid.)

Representative Weaver - President Reagan is dividing the citizens of our Nation once again into hawks and doves, and for what purpose? To finance a band of cut-throat mercenaries in the jungles of Central America. Our job here is to make our Nation strong, our people unified, our children fed, our youth educated, our workers employed, and our seniors secure. To use that great document, the Declaration of Independence, to characterize the Contras of Nicaragua is, to me a degradation of that document. That document stands for a free, noble, and decent people. (Representative Weaver voted against aid.)

Congressman Alexander - My question today is: What has U.S. policy wrought in Central America? What has the \$3.4 billion-plus of investments in U.S. tax dollars brought for us in Central America? It has brought mismanagement and morass, even to the extent of providing almost \$66 million in aid to the Marxist government in Nicaragua. Here it is in black and white. President Reagan's policy has supported the Communist government in Nicaragua. It has brought a heavy economic burden in this country at a time when we are experiencing a serious budget crisis, at a time when our Government is saying no to the farmers, it is saying no to the students, it is saying no to the elderly. Our elderly citizens are being cut from Older Americans assistance because of budgetary constraints, and we are being asked to give \$100 million for the Contras in Central America. The policy has strengthened the Communist government in Nicaragua. (Representative Alexander voted against aid.)

Representative AuCoin - The question is whether another \$100 million in military aid to the Contras will somehow transform that government into a citadel of democracy. The question is whether we should be taking \$10,000 per Contra out of the Treasury at a time when farm export programs are being cut. When public schools in Oregon don't have enough money to keep their doors open. When economic development programs are going begging. The administration is unbelievably, trying to steal this \$100 million from U.S. ammunition accounts, which are already in short supply and critical to U.S. readiness. Now, though the CIA created a Contra civilian corps for political cover, there's no hiding the fact that former Somocistas run the Contra military operations; 9 out of 10 members of the Contra general staff are former Somoza henchmen. (Representative AuCoin voted against aid.)

Representative Miller - I would hope that at the end of this debate we would reject the President's proposal to provide \$100 million in aid to the Contras to be split between military aid and humanitarian aid.

Since that time in 1981, this Congress has been lied to about the amount of money spent on the covert operation, and it has been lied to about the purposes for which that money was spent. We have been told the reason for our policy was drug interdiction and arms interdiction. We have found out that we have engaged in illegal activities; we engaged in the mining of harbors, and in the production of assassination manuals. This country was called before the World Court because of those actions. We have been embarrassed with our allies when the mining of the harbors took place.

We have built this revolution from the Oval Office of the United States. We have built this revolution through the covert activities of the CIA. We were the ones who were lobbying weapons fired into the Miskito villages on the Rio Coco. We are funding the Contras to kill people who out and pick cotton, to kill people who go out and pick coffee, to kill the farmers that would grow it. The women, the children, the men of Nicaragua have been killed by the Contras, in the pursuit of a policy of "putting pressure on the Sandinista regime." (Representative Miller voted against aid.)